
Stem cell agency unveils strategic partnership fund to increase investment and engagement with industry in stem cell therapies for patients

Posted: April 17, 2012

San Francisco, CA – The state's stem cell agency, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), is committing up to \$30 million to a Strategic Partnership Awards Initiative to attract industry engagement and investment in CIRM-funded stem cell research.

Alan Trounson, President of CIRM, says "this initiative is a major new development in the progress towards providing new medical treatments for patients by engaging the most effective global industry partners."

The goal of the initiative is to attract major biotech, venture capital or pharmaceutical company leverage for advances in Californian research to enable companies to achieve, in 4 years or less, the completion of early phase clinical trials in patients. The objective is to enhance the most promising therapies for patients evolving from stem cell discoveries and move them closer to approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"The Strategic Partnership Funding Program represents a new era for CIRM, one that is increasingly focused on moving therapies from the lab to the clinic, while still recognizing the importance of maintaining investments in early stage science," says Elona Baum, General Counsel and Vice President of Business Development at CIRM. "This new initiative provides a vehicle for attracting industry funding and expertise, which are essential for bringing CIRM-funded research to patients."

"This initiative reflects the progress that is being made in stem cell research," says Duane Roth, Vice Chair of the governing board of CIRM. "In the early days of CIRM it was important to focus our attention on basic science. That is paying off and now we are a lot closer to having promising therapies ready for clinical trials, so it makes sense that we step up our engagement with industry to help fund those trials and move those therapies closer to approval by the FDA."

Under the initiative CIRM plans to issue 3 or more awards of up to \$10 million each. The successful applicants will have to match those funds, either dollar for dollar, or by providing in-kind services such as manufacturing and product development.

In addition to demonstrating that their proposed project will result in a completed clinical trial within four years, applicants must also establish evidence of commercial validation in order to be eligible. That means they must either be financially strong enough to move the project through development or be able to attract a partner to help them do that.

"We believe that there are a number of promising candidate stem cell therapies in the research pipeline that are ready for clinical trials," says Ingrid Caras, a Science Officer at CIRM. "However, trials can be expensive. This Strategic Partnership Awards initiative helps smooth out the path to clinical trials by spreading the cost between CIRM and pharmaceutical or biotech companies."

More information on the initiative can be found here: <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/RFA/rfa-12-05-cirm-strategic-partnership-i-awards>

About CIRM: CIRM was established in November 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. A list of grants and loans awarded to date may be seen here: <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/for-researchers/researchfunding>.

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